Highland Park District Council Equity Plan 2020

The Highland District Council (HDC) serves the 24,744 (2017) people living in the Highland Park neighborhood. The Council's mission is to foster opportunities for the people who live, learn, work, and play in Highland Park to engage and connect with neighbors, businesses, and local government, and to help build a more vibrant, welcoming, and safe neighborhood.

Community engagement is the process by which community organizations and individuals build working relationships to foster a collective vision for the neighborhood's benefit.

Equity is a principle that is rooted in fairness and justice. In the context of this equity plan, "equity" is interpreted to refer to the fair and just delivery of district council services with an active effort towards inclusion of all community members especially protected classes in our community.

Equitable community engagement seeks to assure that all voices are heard. This includes the voices of typically disenfranchised and marginalized communities, as well as those with minority opinions. The HDC seeks to do this by reducing barriers to participation and engaging residents in meaningful ways. The HDC seeks to provide residents with the means and information they require so they, along with HDC directors and members, can provide support and guidance to the council and the city in decision-making that impacts the livability and safety of our neighborhood.

Protected classes, within the context of this document, include those among us who could be considered vulnerable to exclusion based on race, ethnicity, culture, language, socio-economic status, home ownership status, religion, sexuality, or gender identity.

Our Values

We aspire to be a neighborhood that welcomes all, where members feel safe and empowered to participate in decisions that impact them. We are Highland Together: Many Communities, One Neighborhood.

Community growth: We will advocate for growth that positively impacts community members. Such growth includes development of a variety of housing options to ensure people interested in living in our community have the opportunity to do so.

Transportation: We will advocate for transportation modalities that make living in our neighborhood safe and accessible for users of all modes of transit.

Community Engagement: We will host and promote a variety of activities designed to build a sense of community, welcome new residents, engage the whole community, promote relationship building, and build visibility for Highland Park and for the Highland District Council.

Our Goals

1. **Hold open and welcoming board and committee meetings.**

   - Post dates and times for all board and committee meetings, emphasizing that meetings are open to the public. Post agenda and minutes online well in advance of meetings.

   - Use multiple venues to reach a broader audience including: social media, newspapers (Villager), signs at the library, community center and other local businesses. Specific outreach ventures might include:

     o Pop-up meetings in non-traditional grid sites.

     o Reach out to all members, including members of protected classes, especially when the Council is dealing with a subject of special interest to them.

     o Assure council directors attend community-based events in all grids over time.

     o Promote inter-grid activities and events.

   - Identify and provide specific community leaders, businesses, organizations, and apartment complexes that serve members of protected classes with relevant communications.

   - Increase visibility and promote a welcoming environment for community members by posting signs directing visitors to the meeting room at the community center, greeting community members, and including a statement by the HDC president or committee chair welcoming residents at the beginning of meetings.

   - Translation – Have computer or phone applications on hand which will allow translation for residents who do not speak English.

   - If other services or accommodations are required to make attendance possible and more inclusive, and such services can be made available given advance notice, every effort should be made to assure that they are available. Promotions should include information for how people may request services and accommodations.

   - Consider including continuing education for board and committee members with topics pertinent to this plan.

2. **Increase active participation in the Highland District Council.**

   - Identify organizations, especially volunteer groups such as churches, fraternal, and cultural groups who will promote awareness of HDC and involvement in its activities.

- Increase community member participation on committees. Committees can be stepping-stones to board involvement and broader civic engagement. More residents involved in committees will create a larger pool of potential leaders and board members. Include HDC committee community member participation in HDC volunteering for community events.

- Create recruitment plans for committees and the board, including recruiting members from protected classes.

- Increase attendance at the Annual Meeting and participation in the election process by protected classes.

- Promote inclusion of district members on city commissions and committees.

- Identify and amend bylaws and procedures which might hinder the active involvement of Highland Park residents, especially the active involvement of members of protected classes.

3. **In all operations, the Highland District Council will seek to assure:**

Transparency

- Communicate clearly and honestly about what decisions have been made, giving as much advance notice as possible to members about changes, especially those which are going to affect them. This includes resolutions, goals, anticipated outcomes, roles and responsibilities, and identification of key decision-makers.

- Report the outcomes and process results of decisions and community engagement activities regularly and promptly.

Accountability

- Start engagement early and seek to understand how communities wish to participate in decision-making processes and engagement activities.

- Respect participant time and investment by communicating how their involvement affects the outcome of decisions.

- Officially review and discuss the Highland District Council Equity Plan outcomes and actions annually with the full board and annually with the Community Engagement Committee. Evaluate effectiveness and results of HDC implementation of the plan.

Inclusion

- Identify and remove barriers to participation in planning and decision-making for members of protected classes wherever possible.

Equity

- Ensure community decisions and activities reflect the active participation of members of all protected classes.

Transformation

- Value communities as partners by committing to long-term relationships and ongoing dialogues which endure beyond any specific funding and project periods.

- Monitor the effectiveness of our engagement and partnerships and be open to continuous improvement based on evaluation results and stakeholder feedback.

Sustainability

- Ensure that this Highland District Council Equity Plan is maintained and promoted over time.

- Support a culture of mutual respect, learning, and development.

- Expand the strengths and assets of communities through training, data sharing, technical assistance, and other applicable resources.

- Build awareness of the organization.